

Security Capabilities Network

The National Strategy Information Center (NSIC), a non-profit Washington-based educational organization, is assessing how to enhance U.S. capabilities – particularly in the areas of intelligence, security, and strategic communication – to manage irregular conflicts. This initiative is an outgrowth of the Center’s major project “Adapting America’s Security Paradigm and Security Agenda.” See the preliminary 2010 Report at www.strategycenter.org/files/adapting_the_paradigm.pdf

Problem: While the threat of conflict arising from authoritarian regimes remains strong, persistent irregular conflicts are proliferating and threaten U.S. interests. Many of these conflicts arise from fragile or failed states, fostering the rise of nonstate actors on local, regional, and global levels. **These are not temporary disruptions. They are key characteristics of early 21st century conflict.**

U.S. civilian security institutions and military services will continue be called upon to help host nations establish security, stability, and the rule of law in irregular conflict zones ranging from the highly violent and kinetic to low-level-embryonic aggression. To be successful, they will need to be prepared, organized, trained, and equipped with doctrine, tools, and skill sets to successfully meet population-centric irregular challenges.

There has been a great deal of attention to this issue over the past decade. It is far from clear, however, that these adaptations are adequate to meet the challenge. NSIC seeks to enhance the development of these capabilities by (i) identifying gaps in existing security, intelligence, and strategic communication capabilities and (ii) developing practical steps to address the identified deficits.

Method: NSIC will convene current and former practitioners and specialists from within and outside the U.S. government to collaborate and to help develop doctrine, tools, and skill sets to successfully prepare for and conduct population-centric operations in irregular conflict zones. These individuals will be drawn from key offices and agencies within the U.S. government, the Legislative branch, and from Washington-based public policy centers, and academia. NSIC will prepare a summary report of the findings.

About NSIC: The National Strategy Information Center, a nonpartisan institution founded in 1962, advances understanding and education about national security issues. The organization has a demonstrated method and successful track record for 1) anticipating U.S. security challenges; 2) identifying effective approaches and methods for managing and mitigating them; and 3) working with government, academia, and civil society to adopt and institutionalize these capabilities.

The conveners of the Network are:

Dr. Roy Godson, President of the National Strategy Information Center, and Professor of Government Emeritus, Georgetown University.

Dr. Nadia Schadow, Senior Program Officer at the Smith Richardson Foundation, who previously served for six years in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Dr. Richard Shultz, Director, International Security Studies Program at The Fletcher School, Tufts University, and Research Director, National Strategy Information Center.